

IDP BACKGROUND

In 2001, when the Taliban regime fell from power, there were approximately 1.2 million internally displaced Afghans throughout the country. The majority of these IDPs were to return spontaneously to their places of origin over the course of several years. Some 99,508 families (493,556 individuals) were assisted by UNHCR from 2002 until 2009 on the basis of a Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Government of Afghanistan, UNAMA and UNHCR which gave UNHCR a lead support role in relation to IDPs.

The majority returned to the north (35%), west (32%) and central (21%) regions.

Region	Families	Individuals	Individuals %
North	31,354	171,283	34.7%
South	4,179	22,268	4.5%
Southeast	696	4,001	0.8%
East	2,579	14,193	2.9%
West	38,103	157,116	31.8%
Central	18,533	102,327	20.7%
Central Highland	3,969	21,848	4.4%
Various	95	520	0.1%
Total	99,508	493,556	100.0%

IDP return pattern since 2002

In 2005, a National Policy was endorsed by the Consultative Group on Returnees, Refugees and IDPs, placing an increased emphasis on the promotion of durable solutions through voluntary return and local settlement in accordance with the UN Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement and affirming the lead role of the Afghan Government.

2008 MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

In April 2008, the Government of Afghanistan welcomed the decision of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator to introduce the Cluster System into Afghanistan, with the ultimate goal to bring greater coherence, predictability and accountability into the humanitarian response. In relation to IDPs, a National IDP Task Force has been established together with two other Regional IDPs Task Forces (central, southern and western regions, all of which work as subordinate coordination bodies for the National Protection Cluster.

Under the auspices of the National IDP Task Force, co-Chaired by the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and UNHCR, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), and interested government/donor agencies, a national report was completed in August 2008, profiling for the first time since 2002 the IDP situation across Afghanistan. The preparation of the report was a direct response to a recommendation of the Representative of the Secretary General on the

Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons following his visit to Afghanistan in August 2007. Its purpose was to know how many people were internally displaced, where and why, as well as to better understand their assistance and protection needs. The report's information on displacement issues, profiles and trends is intended to assist the government to develop a comprehensive and integrated national IDP strategy and to help the humanitarian community to respond more effectively to IDP assistance, protection and durable solutions needs.



IDPs in Kabul

What the profiling makes clear is that Afghanistan is highly complex with different displacements having occurred at different times, in different parts of the country and for different reasons. Thus, finding durable solutions will be neither easy nor quick.

The profile suggests the need to reinforce the focus on local integration as a durable solution for protracted IDP populations who are unable to return. At the same time, return possibilities remain open to be explored, particularly in relation to some groups displaced in the southern region – for example, there have been positive results from recent UNHCR-organised “go and see” visits of IDPs to their places of origin in the north.

CURRENT IDP CASELOAD

The recent published National IDP profiling report identified 235,833 IDPs nationwide. The bulk of this population is comprised of a protracted caseload of 166,153 individuals displaced as a result of conflict in the period prior to and after the fall of the Taliban in 2001, or as a result of drought of the 1990s which impacted severely on Kuchi (nomads) in the north, the west and the south. These IDPs are largely living in camp-like settlements in the south (119,958), the west (29,690) and the southeast (12,341). There are some new IDPs that have fled their homes as a result of conflict, insecurity and human rights violations since 2002.

Many thousands of conflict-induced IDPs were displaced in 2007 and additional thousands in 2008. Numbers are difficult to determine because most of these are short-term IDPs who return to their homes after the fighting.

There are also some 50,000 returnees in displacement (around 28,000 individuals of these have settled in five spontaneous temporary settlements in the provinces of Nangarhar and Laghman in the eastern region of Afghanistan), unable to return to their places of origin for security reasons, landlessness, or lack of basic services or work opportunities.



Kuchi in Maslakh Settlement, Hirat

IDP ASSISTANCE

To respond to IDP issues, the Government, through its Departments of Refugees and Rehabilitation (DoRRs) in all provinces, works in close cooperation with the humanitarian community to address the needs of displaced persons to assistance i.e., food, water, shelter, health, and education, as well as addressing their protection concerns, with particular attention to especially vulnerable individuals and families.

UNHCR provides assistance to the IDPs return and reintegration process including medical screening prior to travel, providing safe, dignified and secure means of transportation and transit support as well as initial reintegration assistance. The assistance activities are implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation (MoRR) and other relevant Government actors and NGO partners where required.

2009 PERSPECTIVES

It is likely that displacements will continue as a result of fighting between international and Afghan government forces on the one hand and insurgents (Taliban and other AGEs) on the other. Secondly, the displacement as a result of the drought, in both the West and the North, needs to be carefully monitored. It is likely that there will be increasing conflict over land and resources (especially water) that may lead

both to violence and to displacement unless more comprehensive measures are taken to improve land use management.

Certain trends emerge as we look to the future and the type of contingency planning that is required to address likely IDP scenarios: an increase in conflict-induced displacement is expected if the fighting continues and the security situation deteriorates further; increased displacement is also likely if the drought continues and the economic situation does not improve; increased secondary displacement may result if returnees' repatriation to and reintegration in their places of origin is not sustainable; and increases in IDP populations may also result as a consequence of conflict over land and resources, unless land and property issues are adequately addressed. Thus, as work begins to focus on finding durable solutions for protracted populations, the IDP Task Force and other coordination mechanisms for dealing with displacement will need to continually and carefully monitor and coordinate responses to new and potential displacements.

One must, of course, be pragmatic and realistic: where IDPs are displaced in areas over which the government has little or no control, or where it is not possible for government or humanitarian actors to intervene, expectations will need to be tempered by on-the-ground security realities.

UNHCR will continue to monitor the situation of IDPs, particularly through its human rights field monitoring (HRFM), which will be more focused on the situation of IDPs human rights in 2009.

While UNHCR will continue to explore and facilitate return for IDPs currently living under difficult conditions in the south, local integration will be continuously pursued and advocated for with the Afghan national and provincial authorities, particularly on issues related to shelter, land for agriculture and access to social services in the respective regions of displacement.

Region	Families	Males	Females	Individuals
North	365	940	903	1,843
South	22,274	59,336	57,009	116,345
Southeast	2,324	7,458	7,166	14,624
East	9,314	28,501	27,383	55,884
West	6,701	17,304	16,626	33,930
Central	1,345	3,690	3,546	7,236
Central Highland	-	-	-	-
Totals	42,323	117,230	112,632	229,862

IDP caseload

Additional information on the UNHCR's assistance and work with IDPs can be found on our website: <http://www.unhcr.org>. Other relevant websites: www.aihrc.org.af and www.unama-afg.org.